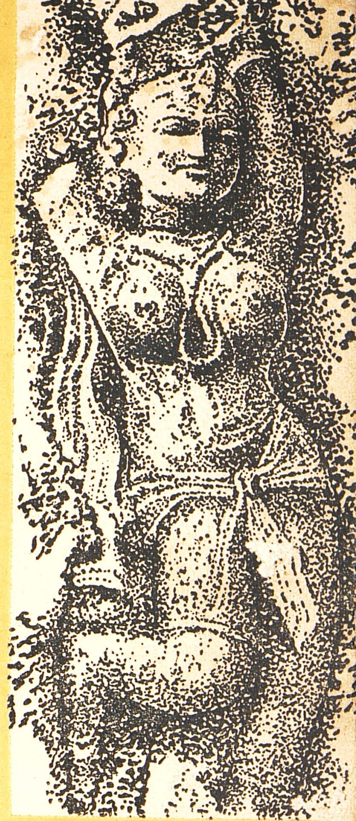
Konarka



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THE SUN TEMPLE OF KONARKA

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The Sun Temple of KONARKA

Introductory

WHILE the words *Mithra, Mithras* (Friend), *Maitreya* (Compassion: The Compassionate One) belong to the oldest vocabulary of Aryan India, it is not certain whether the term *Mithra, Mithras* for the Iranian God of Light and the Ruler of the Universe and the Sanskrit *Mithra* have a common origin. In the Iranian worship Mithra is the Friend because the Sun is the Friend of man and his Protector after death.

Sun worship, however, did not originate in India. The cult was long established in Iran. Though Sun worship is a part of the daily ritual of Hindus through the *Gayatri* prayer, Sun or *Surya* was not among the principal deities of India. The spread of the Sun cult in India, between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, is, therefore, all the more interesting, not to say intriguing. Perhaps the collapse of the Sassanids dynasty in Iran in the seventh century was responsible for the eastward drift of Mithraic priests. By the eighth century the Sun cult had taken root in Kashmir.

Buddhism which had spread from Magadha (Bihar and Orissa of today) in the east across India right up to Afghanistan was still the 'State' religion in Kashmir. According to the Kashmiri chronicle, *Rajatarangini*, Emperor Lalitaditya built a *chaitya* (in which was a huge copper image of the Buddha) and a *raj-vihara* at Parihasapura,* his capital. His chief minister, Chankuna, built a *stupa*. The *stupa* was destroyed by Harsha who, according to the same chronicle, spared the *chaitya* and *vihara*; but these were destroyed and their rich treasures plundered by Sikander Butshikan (1390-1414).

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*Parihasapura. About 13 miles north-west of Srinagar. Srinagar was then known as Pravarapura.

It was this same Lalitaditya who was responsible for building the first Sun Temple in India. It was built at Martand, which is near Anantnag—Islamabad, and thirty-four miles from Srinagar. Its ruins are still there. The date was probably somewhere in the first quarter of the eighth century. Lalitaditya died about the middle of that century.

Lalitaditya was one of those rulers restless for new empires to conquer, and during his reign Kashmir was the focus of attention of the whole of India as well as of Iran, Tibet and China. His conquests extended from Kabul to Orissa in the east, from southern Tibet to the Deccan. After each war he returned to his capital with loot and royal hostages. Perhaps it was to celebrate a victory, or perhaps to ensure a victory on the eve of a new expedition, that he caused the Sun Temple at Martand to be built. From Martand the Sun cult spread through the Punjab into Gujarat until it reached its most glorious achievement in the Konarka Sun Temple in Orissa on the very edge of the Bay of Bengal.

There was a Sun Temple at Multan which was razed to the ground by Mahmud Ghazni on his southward march to Gujarat where he plundered and destroyed the hallowed Somnath Temple. The year was 1024 or 1026. King Bhima I of the Solanki dynasty was then reigning in Gujarat. Perhaps the dispossessed priests of the Sun Temple of Multan came to Bhima's court; perhaps Bhima who was then forming alliances with his brother princes against Mahmud Ghazni intended it as a direct challenge when under his patronage the Sun Temple at Modhera in Gujarat was built in 1026-1027. Today Modhera is in ruins and stands amidst a sandy waste on the west coast of India. But much remains of the ruins to give us an idea of the splendour of the original.

In the eleventh century the Chandel kings of Central India (Madhya Pradesh) built the imposing group of temples at Khajuraho, one of them which still stands there being dedicated to *Surya* or the Sun-God. Both the temple and the statue of the Sun-God at Khajuraho are still in a fair state of preservation.

This west-east trend of Sun worship reached its highest perfection at Konarka in Orissa.

Bihar and Orissa, having been part of Asoka's empire, had

become completely Buddhist, and till the sixth century A.D. remained a stronghold of Buddhism. There were Buddhist temples, *stupas*, monasteries and universities. Hiuen Tsang who travelled in India during the seventh century A.D., mentions a town named 'Chelitalo' on the south-east frontier of the kingdom. He says : "On the south-east frontiers of the country, on the borders of the ocean, is the town of Chelitalo, about 20 *li* round. Here it is merchants depart for distant countries, and strangers come and go and stop here on their way. The walls of the city are strong and lofty. Here are found all sorts of rare and precious articles. Outside the city there are five convents (Buddhist nunneries are here meant) one after the other, their storied towers are very high, and are carved with figures of saints exquisitely done."*

So that when Konarka was chosen to be the site of the greatest Sun Temple of India, it was a site already famous as a centre of pilgrimage, situated amidst fertile lands watered by a river, and above all, a site which commanded an impressive view of the Rising Sun.

Origin

Buddhism had entered its decline in the land of its birth, and a Hindu revivalism, aggressive, evangelistic, was abroad. However, there were still thousands of Buddhist monks and nuns, and there were hundreds of temples and monasteries, and scores of Buddhist centres of learning. These Buddhist adherents were not going to give in so easily. They held their ground, losing inch by inch, until the eleventh century. But by then deprived of royal patronage they had to bow to the inevitable.

In Orissa, Buddhism held sway until the sixth century when it was superseded by Hinduism. But the complete overthrow of Buddhism in Orissa was not until the eleventh century. Buddhists, Buddhist monks and nuns, and Buddhist saints continued to flourish in Orissa, in diminishing strength, of course, until the eleventh century.†

Many scholars are of the opinion that up to the sixth century Magadha was studded with Buddhist temples, and that the famous

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*See Appendix I
†See Appendix II

Hindu temples of Bhuvaneswar—Bhuvanescara as it is called in ancient texts—were built on the site of what had been formerly Buddhist temples.

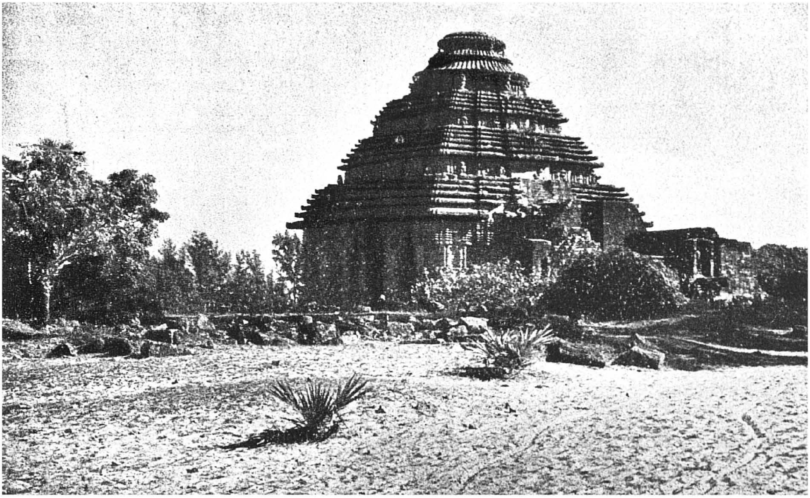
It is inconceivable, even if Asoka failed to erect a monolith at so prominent a place as Konarka, that succeeding Buddhist Kings would have failed to repair the omission by building a temple close to the sea at Konarka, a temple to arouse the curiosity of sea-farers.

The style of architecture of the main temple and the sculpture, and the Maya Devi Temple to the south-west of the main temple at Konarka, all point to the fact that before the ninth century there was a temple at Konarka. We shall not, however, pursue that thesis in the present narrative. Let us examine the recorded legends and history of the Sun Temple of Konarka.

Legend of Samba

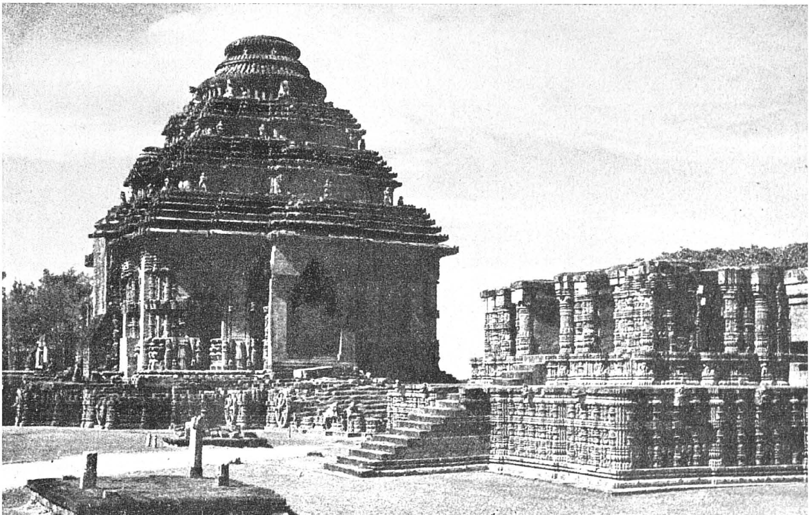
Just as some divine manifestation or miracle is invariably the explanation for the existence of chapels and sanctuaries in other lands, the origin of the Sun Temple is clothed in an intriguing legend about Samba, son of Sri Krishna. The *Bhavishya Purana* version of this legend may be summarised thus:

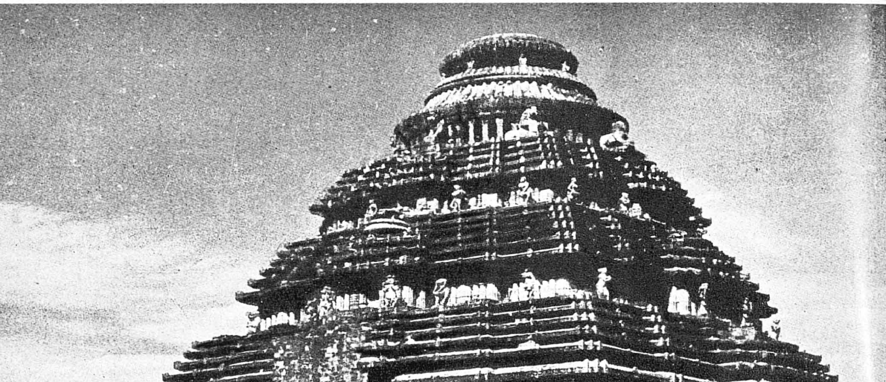
> Samba, son of Sri Krishna and Jāmbavatī, was cursed by Rishi Durvāsā, as a result of which he became a leper. When Samba appealed to his father, he advised his son to become a Sun-worshipper. Samba went to the forest called *Mittra Vana* on the banks of the river Chandrabhaga. There he practised penances for many years till, at last, pleased by his devotion, the Sun-God appeared to him and asked what boon he craved. Samba asked that he be whole and cured of the disfiguring disease. The boon was granted and Samba became again the handsome youth he was. He then asked for a second boon, namely, that whenever he prayed to the Sun, the Sun would appear before him. The Sun-God told him that in the river Chandrabhaga he would find a statue of the Sun-God, that he should take it out and set it up and worship it.
>
> Samba followed the directions and was overjoyed to find the statue of the Sun-God and he took it out of the river and built a temple over it.



A general view of the Sun Temple at Konarka

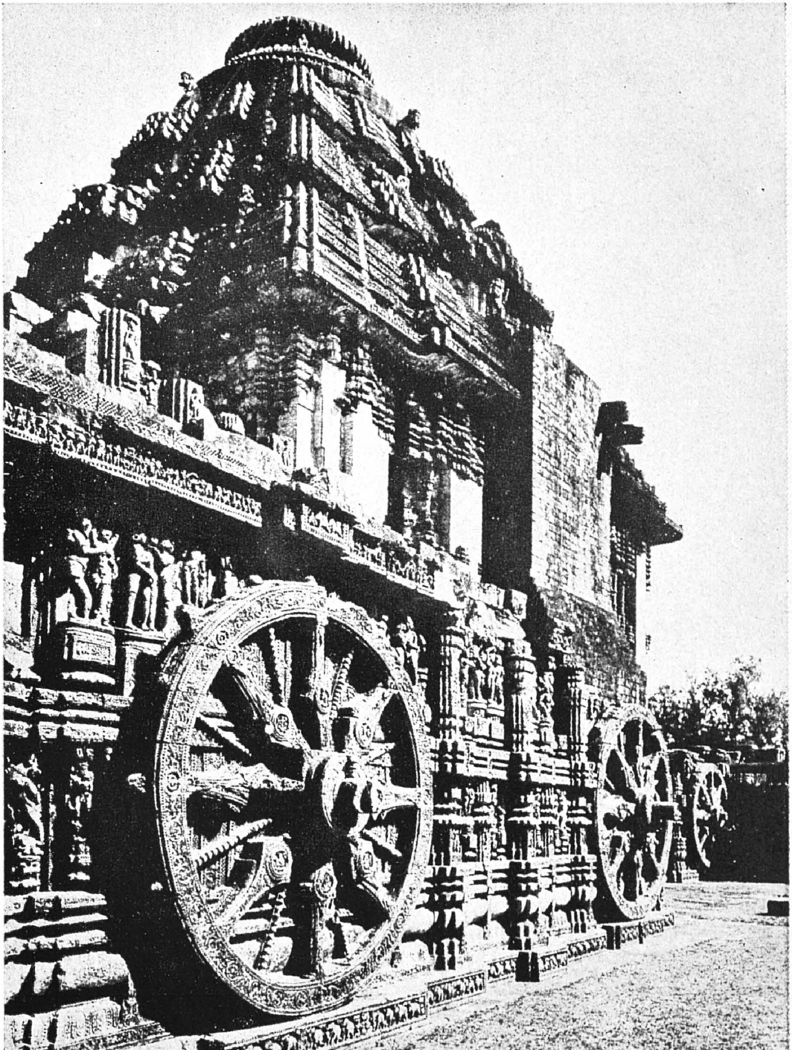
The Sun Temple and (at right) the Natamandir

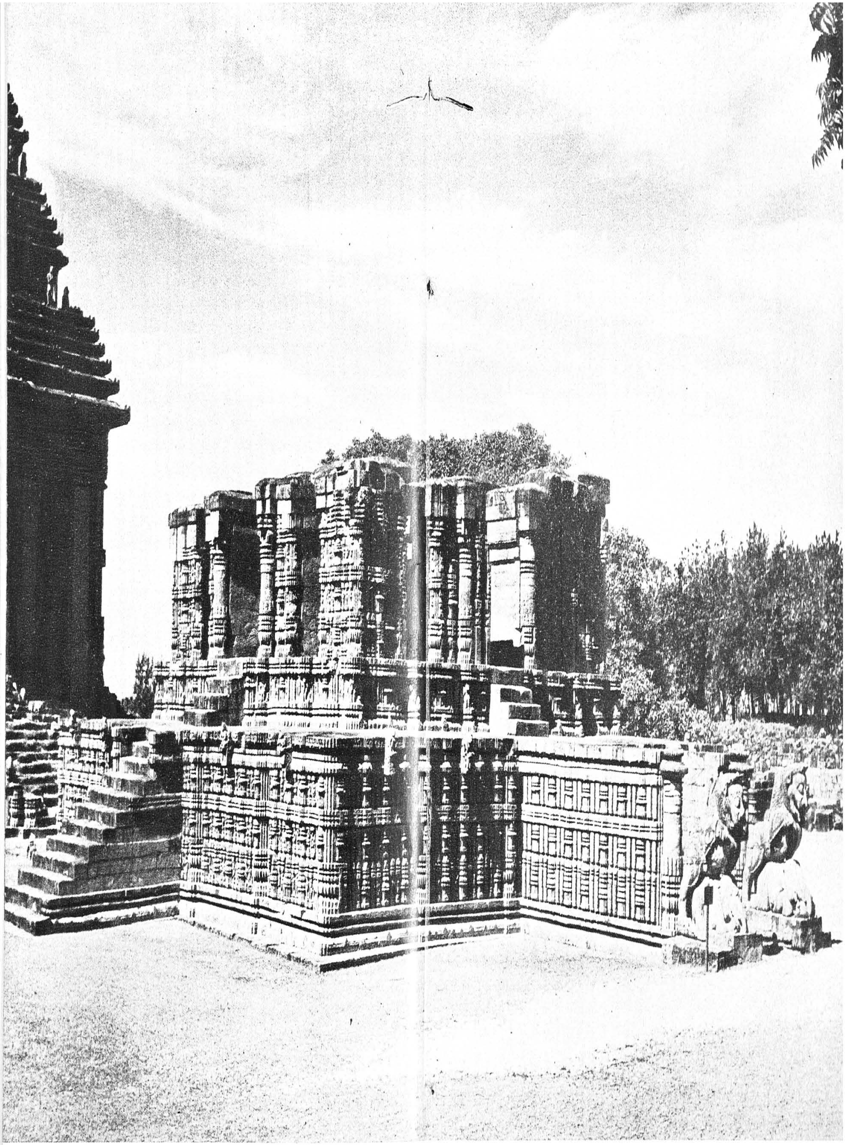




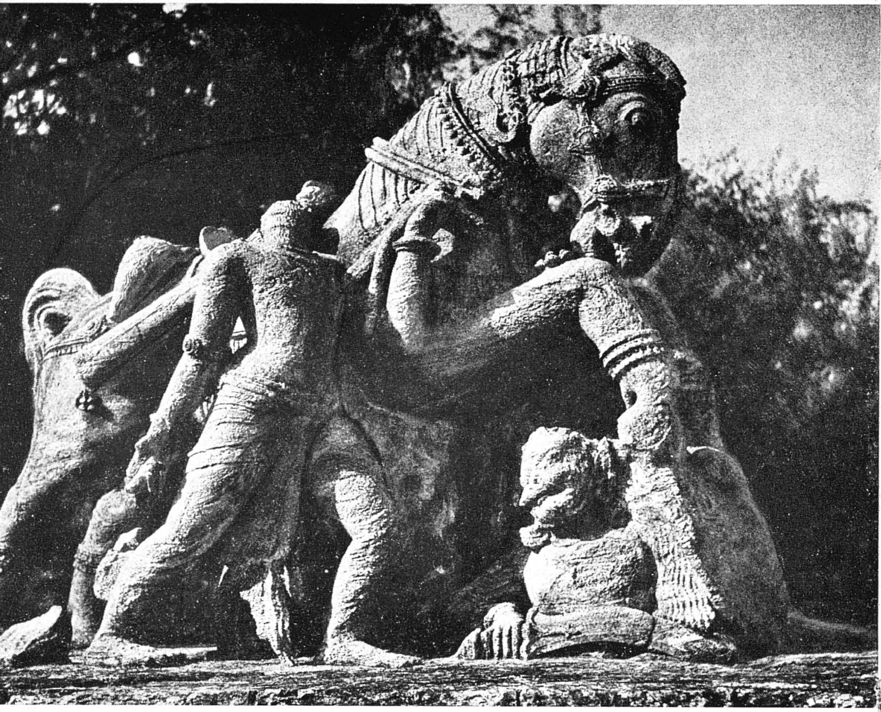
A close view of the profusely sculptured exterior of the Sun Temple

The base of the Sun Temple has finely sculptured wheels of huge dimensions. The temple was conceived by the builders in the form of a gigantic chariot drawn by seven spirited horses. The entire space of the base and the twenty-four wheels is covered with rich carvings.





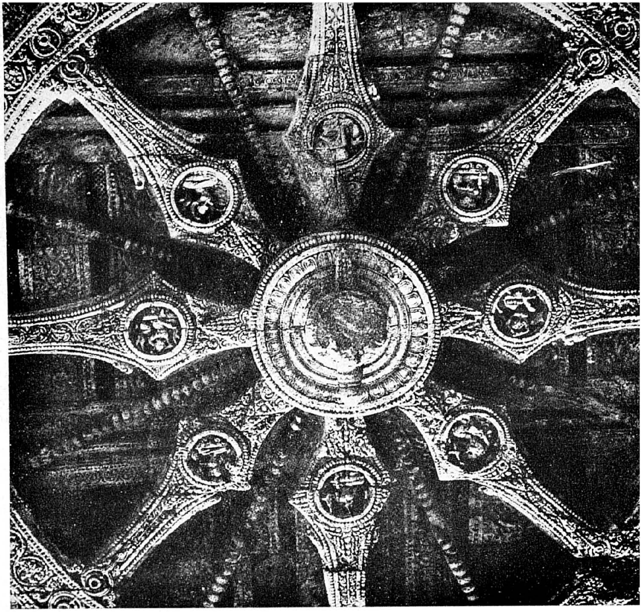
The Natamandir (above) is detached from the main temple. Square in shape, this roofless structure has a large number of dancing figures carved on the walls and pillars. The two-tiered platform is approached by four flights of steps, one in each direction.



Impetuous war-steed with dismounted rider is a famous sculpture.

A close-up of one of the twenty-four gigantic wheels. Each spoke, the hub, the circumference and the tread are all richly carved with minute decorations of human, animal and plant motifs.

The fineness and ingenuity of the carvings on the wheel attest to the highly developed state of the carver's art at that time. The eight figures of women in the rosettes of the wheel are remarkable for the beauty of their postures, each different from the other.



One of the eight female figures depicted in the rosettes of the wheel shown above.

Now, Samba wanted a priest to perform the daily worship at the temple: so he asked the priest of Ugrasen, the Raja of Mittra, to perform the daily rituals. The priest would not, and Samba was forced to invite Magha priests from Sakadwipa, the island of the Sakas or Scythians. Thus, the Magha priests came to India, and thus began the Sun cult in India.

Scholars have found a resemblance between Maghas and the Mughs or Fire-worshippers of Iran. The legend itself is both ingenious and convincing. The Sun cures many diseases. None can worship the Sun without coming out into the open air and without turning towards the Sun.

A minor *Purana*, one of the eighteen *Upa-Puranas*, is called *Samba Purana*. According to this version Samba was too forward in his association with the many *Gopis* of Sri Krishna and one day Rishi Narada brought Sri Krishna to the scene of a dalliance between Samba and the *Gopis*, whereupon Sri Krishna uttered the curse upon his son. When the curse took effect it was too late to revoke it. All that Sri Krishna could do was to advise Samba to go to *Mittra Vana* and perform penance for twelve years and invoke the Sun. The rest of the *Samba Purana* version coincides with the older version mentioned already.

The *Samba Purana* is incorporated with the *Bhavishya Purana* which describes Sun worship in great detail--the rituals as well as the duties of feeding the Brahmins who were the preceptors and officiating priests at the Sun Temples.

While the legend itself has all the charm of Indian mythology the geography is open to question.

A silted up channel which at the best of the season is a couple of pools is known locally as the Chandrabhaga. But as Krishna's abode known as Dwaraka was in the west, the Chandrabhaga has been identified with the Chenab river which is a tributary of the Indus. The Dwaraka of today is near enough to the Chenab to make the legend of Samba doing his penances at a place on the banks of the Chenab credible. That apart, poetic licence and the unities of time and place demand that Samba in order to be cured of his affliction should have worshipped the Sun at Konarka where was installed the river-statue found in the

Chandrabhaga which in those prehistoric times might have been quite a sizable river.

Chronology

Against this background of mythology the Konarka Sun Temple appears even more mysterious. Mythology enters into the chronology of the temple; and the conflicting accounts sometimes in the same text as in the case of the records (*Madala Panji*) of the temple at Puri make a historical perspective difficult. These records, for example, give a list of the kings of the Kesari (Lion) dynasty, and mention the thirtieth king of the dynasty, Purandara Kesari, as the builder of the 'Konarka Deva in the Arka Kshetra'. There were 44 kings of this dynasty whose reigns totalled 670 years. The *Ithihas* (history) portions of these temple records mention the number of kings as 44 but give them a total reign of '1823 years, 9 months, and 19 days'—and Purandara Kesari is not one of them.

The Kesari dynasty was followed by the Ganga dynasty; and the *Ithihas* of the *Madala Panji* mentions Narsingha Deva who ascended the throne in the 181st year of the Ganga dynasty. It says:

> "After this Langula Narsingha Deva became Raja. In the third *anka* of this Maharaja, he laid the foundation of the temple at Konarka. Having given the charge of building the temple to Shiva Samantaray Mahapatra, he undertook an expedition to the south which occupied him twelve years. The temple was consecrated in his twenty-third *anka*. This Raja reigned for twenty-six years."

These contradictory statements are reconciled in yet another temple record which claims that Narsingha Deva built a temple in front of an existing one previously built by Purandara Kesari. This record which gives with all the accuracy of a book-keeper the various amounts of gold given by various kings for detailed expenses of the temple—'camphor and sandal-wood: flowers: *bhoga* or food for the gods at morning, noon and evening: for special rites: for attendants'—is interesting in that the priest-scribe is gently hinting to the reigning monarch that he should increase the allowance!

The following reference in this record is of particular interest because it mentions Purandara Kesari and the fact of Samba having

returned to Dwaraka, which would have meant a cross-country journey from east to west. To quote :

> "From that day (after Samba left for Dwaraka) Maitraditya Surya (the Sun-God) lived in the temple built on the Chandrabhaga at Konarka Kshetra.* Then Rajas of several *Yugas* (time-cycles) worshipped Him there, and in this *Kaliyuga*, after several Rajas had passed, Purandara Kesari Raja constructed a temple at this place and established eight Brahmapur Sasanas (priest guilds) for the worship of the god. Then beginning with the Kesari Rajas who came after him up to Chudanga Deva and Purushottama Deva of the Ganga dynasty all the Rajas worshipped the god. After this in the same Ganga *vansha* Ananga Bhima Deva Maharaja having increased his revenue above what was realised by his predecessors increased the amount of offerings and fixed the sums to be spent on the god's *bhoga* (food), *sevaks* (attendants), and Kshetra *devatas* (minor deities)."

This zealous king, Ananga Bhima Deva, also vowed that he would build a bigger Purushottama temple than the one which then existed at Puri. He died without fulfilling his vow and, therefore, his son, Narsingha Deva, sent his Minister (*Patra*), Shiva Samantaray, with instructions to erect at Konarka a temple in front of that built by Purandara Kesari. After its erection he "consecrated it, and bringing the statue of the Sun-God from the older temple, kept it here and gave more offerings and lands than those given by his father, and thereby got his father absolved of the sin of the unfulfilled promise thus enabling his father's soul to go to Heaven."

This version deserves credence because it supports the view held by many scholars that the Sun cult spread across India from Kashmir between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, following the building of the first Sun Temple at Martand during Lalitaditya's reign, that the Sun Temple at Modhera originally built probably in the tenth century was completed in 1027 A.D., under the patronage of Bhima I of the Solanki dynasty of Gujarat—Mahmud of Ghazni had just about that time razed to the ground the Sun Temple of Multan

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* *Kshetra*, literally a field, means a region: e.g. Kurukshetra.

and the famous Somnath Temple—and that Purandara Kesari had built the Sun Temple at Konarka over what had been previously a Buddhist temple somewhere about the tenth century. Narsingha Deva building the later temple which is the one to be seen today against the earlier one built by Purandara Kesari is, therefore, chronologically acceptable.

There was a later Narsingha Deva mentioned in 'an abridged version of the *Madala Panji* which is quoted by Dr. Rajendralal Mitter, one of the authorities on Konarka. According to this version:

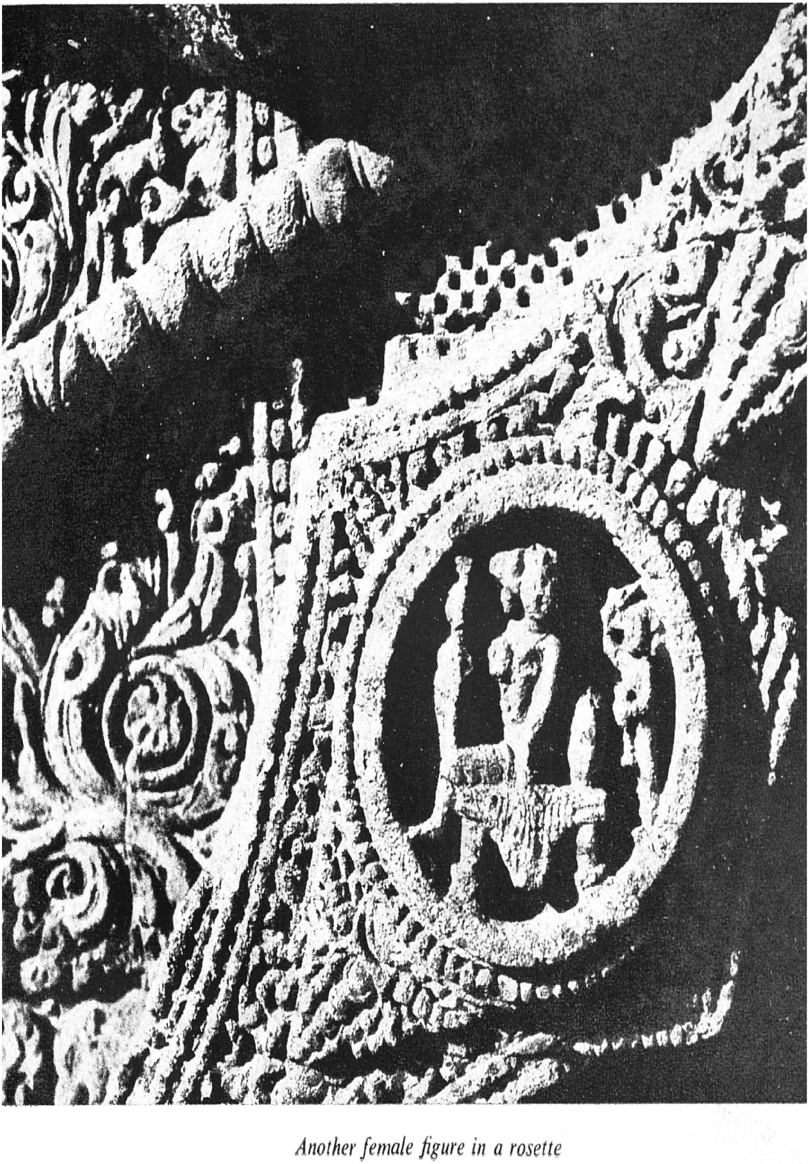
> "His son, Langula Narsingha Deva reigned for 45 years, Saka era 1204. This king erected in the Arka Kshetra a temple to the God Konarka. His seal runs thus: The Lord of the earth, the tailed King Narsingha, erected a temple for the ray-garlanded God in the Saka year twelve hundred."

The fuller *Madala Panji*, on the other hand, has this reference:

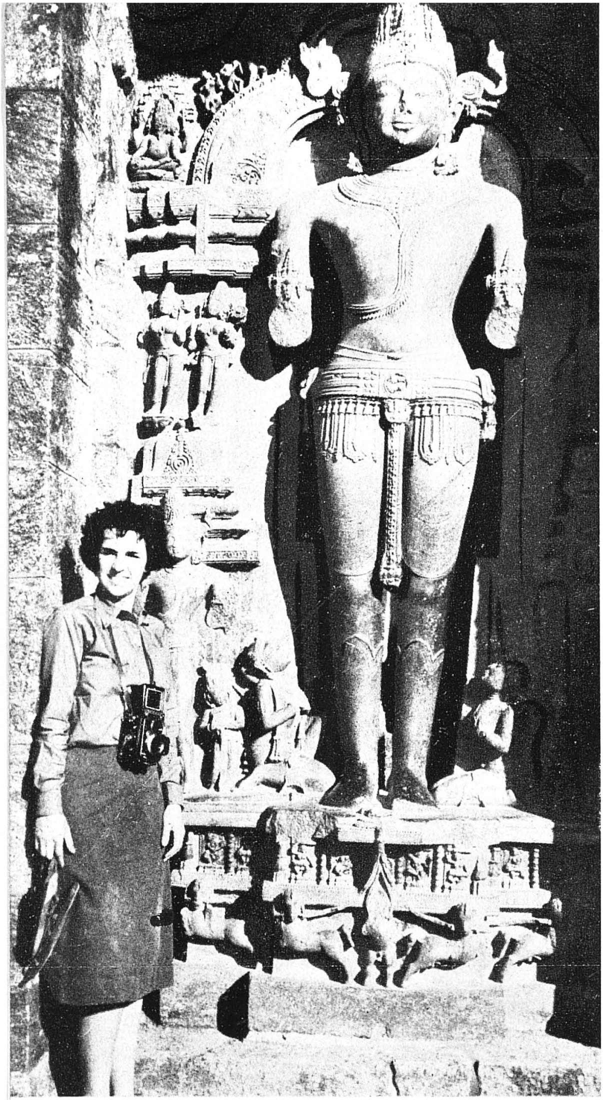
> "Then Narsingha Deva, grandson of Maharaja Ramachandra Deva, and son of Purshottama Deva, went to see the temple in his ninth *anka* on a Monday, 21st day of *Mina*. On that day the *Suba* (State) of Orissa was given to Bakar Khan by the Emperor of Delhi (Shah Jahan)."

Several scholars, including Bishan Swarup, who as an engineer of the Public Works Department, Bengal, had much to do with the removing of the debris and the building of supports and the carrying out of extensive repairs to the Sun Temple, and who has examined all available documents and records, and is therefore one of the most reliable authorities, cast doubts upon the accuracy of the Puri temple records, both the fuller version, the *Panji*, and the abridged version. His conclusions as embodied in his monograph, *Konarka, The Black Pagoda of Orissa*, and published in 1910 are worth quoting. He says:

> "The *Madala Panji* says that the temple of Konarka was erected by Purandara Kesari. No date is given. . . . Chodaganga or Gangeswar, who succeeded to the throne after the Kesari dynasty, came to Orissa about the year 1100 A.D.; so Purandara Kesari was ruling in Orissa about the year 870 A.D. This corresponds very closely with the date given by Abul Fazl.

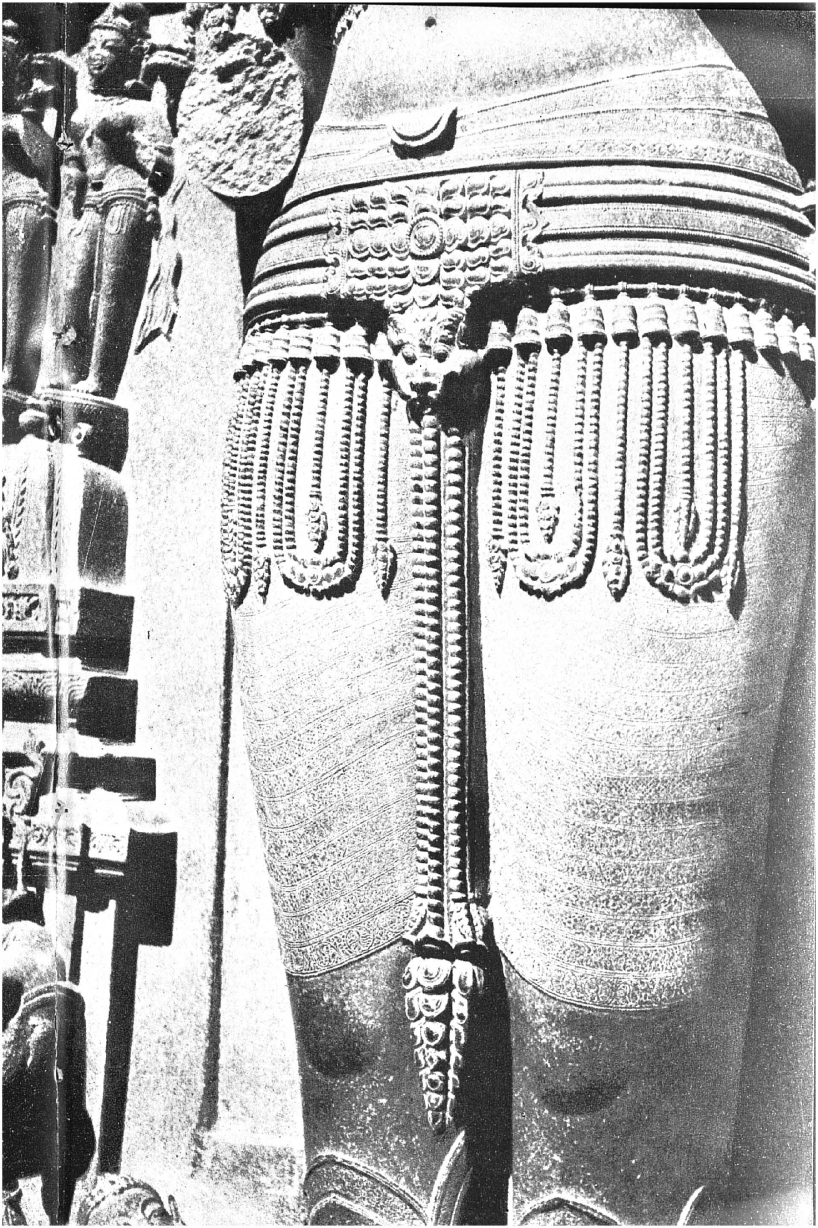


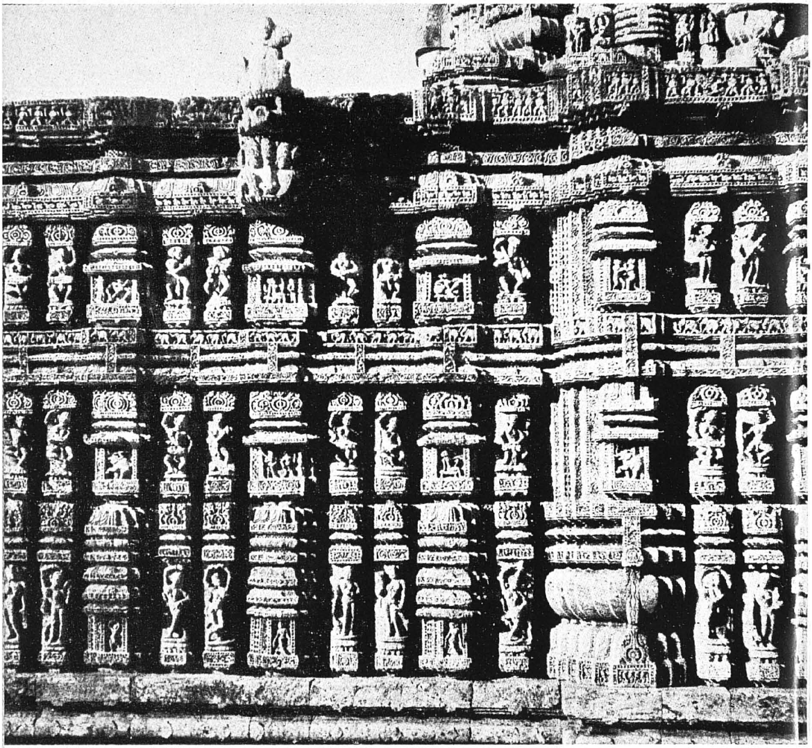
Another female figure in a rosette



This view of the Sun-God's bejewelled girdle and lower raiment reveals fine workmanship. The bands in the drapery are remarkable for the beauty of the designs, each of a different kind.

Standing image of the resplendent Sun-God. It is a good specimen of Kalinga's classical style of art. The Sun-God is depicted in this sculpture as attended by two "ganas" (small standing figures on each side).





Intricate floral patterns and rows of single female figures in different postures decorate the facade of the platform of the Natamandir

In another place, the *Panji* says that Raja Narsingha Deva of Ganga *vansha* got the Konarka temple erected through his minister Shebai Samanta Rai. This Raja ruled Orissa for 33 years from 1223 to 1256 A.D. according to the copper plate inscription mentioned above. The *Panji* gives only 26 years for his reign and 25 years for the next reign; the total of the two, 51 years, corresponds with the total of the two reigns given in the inscription, viz., 33 and 18. The latter being a document of only 39 years after the death of Narsingha Deva must be taken as more reliable than the *Panji* which has simply divided the total of the two reigns equally. This shows that the *Panji* is not at all a contemporary record for the time, and much guess work has found room in its pages. If we take the 18th year (23rd *anka*) as given in the *Panji* for the consecration of the temple, the date comes to be 1241 A.D... It may be noted that the date given in the seal (1200 Saka or 1278 A.D.) which is quoted by Dr. Rajendralal Mitter and so much relied upon by him, is utterly incorrect. The question now comes that if the Konarka temple was built by Purandara Kesari, which building was meant to be the work of Narsingha Deva, for the copper plate inscription referred to above makes a mention of it....

Sthatum Surais saha mahat kalayanti
Konakone kutirakamachikaradusnarashmes

which has been translated as:
'He built at Konakona, a place of great renown, a temple for the Sun to live in with the other gods.' The word *Kutirakam*, which means a hut or a small house, can hardly be applicable to the grand pagoda. There is another objection to the translation. The presiding divinity of the place being Konarka himself, and there being no temples of any other gods close by, excepting perhaps very minor ones of his own parasitic *Kshetra devatas*, the words *to live with other gods* have no meaning. The more correct translation appears to me to be as follows : He erected in the well-renowned place of Konakona of (belonging to) the Sun-God a building in order to stay with the gods, meaning a building where the pilgrims could sit for a short time in the

Devasthana (vicinity of the gods). In other words, he built the Natamandir in the front of the Black Pagoda....

The testimony of old records thus leads us to the conclusion that the temple of Konarka was built by Purandara Kesari in the latter half of the 9th century, and its Natamandir was constructed in 1241 by Raja (Nagroo) Narsingha Deva of the Gangetic dynasty....The Temple of Maya Devi is similar in architecture and details to the main temple of Konarka, and may be taken to have been constructed with it...."

Apart from the fact that the Sun cult spread from Kashmir in the eighth century, the fact that the Kesari kings were Shiva worshippers upholds this theory that the first Sun Temple at Konarka was built in the ninth century. Tantric rituals, *Asvamedha* or horse-sacrifices, and even human sacrifices formed a part of that earlier Shiva worship. By the 12th century northern India in general, and Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in particular, came under the influence of the *Bhakti* cult and as a result Krishna-worship and Vishnu-worship became more popular. A Natamandir for devotional dances or *bhajans*, *kirtans* and similar community singing of devotional songs would have been appropriate with the *Bhakti* cult of Ramanuja and other mystics of the time.

Abul Fazl, the minister-historian of Akbar, and author of *Ain-i-Akbari* ('The Epoch of Akbar'), is another authority whose views being those of a non-Hindu and of a person whose identity is undisputed and whose era was fairly close to ours, we can rely on. This is his account of Konarka Temple after visiting it. I have preferred again Bishan Swarup's translation:

"Also near Jagannath (Puri) is a temple dedicated to the Sun. Twelve years' revenue of that country was spent on it. Experts, difficult to please, are struck with amazement on seeing it. The height of its walls is a hundred and fifty hands and their thickness nineteen. It has three doorways. On the eastern one are figures of two elephants nicely carved, each catching hold of a man in its trunk; on the western door figures of two horsemen have been set up with all equipment and splendour; and on the northern, there are likenesses of two lions each making prey of an elephant and standing rampant on it. In front (of the temple)

is an octagonal pillar of black stone, fifty yards in height. On ascending the nine flights of steps (leading to the temple) one sees a spacious enclosure (hall) and a large niche, built in stone, in which has been carved the Sun with other planets. All round (the temple) are represented a variety of human figures in different moods, some with their heads on the ground, others standing, sitting, or lying, some laughing, some weeping, some wondering (at something), others seem to be knowing. Besides, there are different sorts of minstrels, and a number of strange animals which do not exist except in imagination. They say seven hundred and odd years ago Raja Narsingha Deva finished this grand building, and left (for himself) a big memorial. In that vicinity, there are twenty-eight temples, six in front of the doors and twenty-two outside the compound, and there are stories connected with each of these."

Fergusson, the noted British authority on Indian and eastern architecture commenting upon Abul Fazl's narrative says: "After describing the temple, and ascribing it to Raja Narsingh Deo, in A.D. 1241, with an amount of detail and a degree of circumstantiality which has deceived everyone, he quietly adds that it is said to be a work of 730 years' antiquity. In other words, it was erected in A.D. 850 or A.D. 873, according to the date we assume for the composition of the 'Ayeen Akbery' ". (Akbar's reign covered the second half of the sixteenth century, and was succeeded by that of his son, Jahangir, 1603-27.)

What does emerge from this maze of conjectures is the fact that the so-called 'tailed king Narasingha', that is Narasingha Deva II, whose 'reign' was from A.D. 1628 to 1645, did visit the Konarka Temple on the day that his kingdom was made a vassal State of Shah Jahan under a Muslim viceroy, Bakar Khan, and that in his presence the measurements of the temple were taken by Swasia Nath Mahapatra of Puri. A record of these measurements is available but we shall avoid a recital of it. The measurements then taken indicate that the plinth of the temple was already buried under debris and that the whole temple was deserted and in ruins. The year of the royal visit was very likely 1628.

Abul Fazl himself omits to mention the *ratha* (chariot) formation

of the temple; he says nothing of the magnificent wheels, nothing at all about the superb horse statuary, the grandest rendering of horses in slow action depicted anywhere in the world; and he did not observe many features of the temple that are exposed to the view of the visitor today. He has seen only the Jagamohan, or porch of the Konarka Temple.

So, long before Narasingha Deva II visited the ruined temple it was a mass of ruins buried partly under its own debris.

The Puri Temple records state that during the reign of King Mukunda Deva (A.D. 1565) the *Yavanas* under the idol-breaking leader Kalapahar attacked Orissa and that they tried to raze down the Konarka Temple. The temple had been so firmly built that the attempts of the vandals were in vain. However, they carried away the copper *kalasa* and *dhwaja*, the crown of the tower.

A Shiva temple ceases to be sanctified when it is desecrated by infidels. That fact and also the fact of the capital having been shifted from Puri (twenty-one miles from Konarka) to Khurda after the death of Mukunda Deva caused the Sun Temple to be deserted.

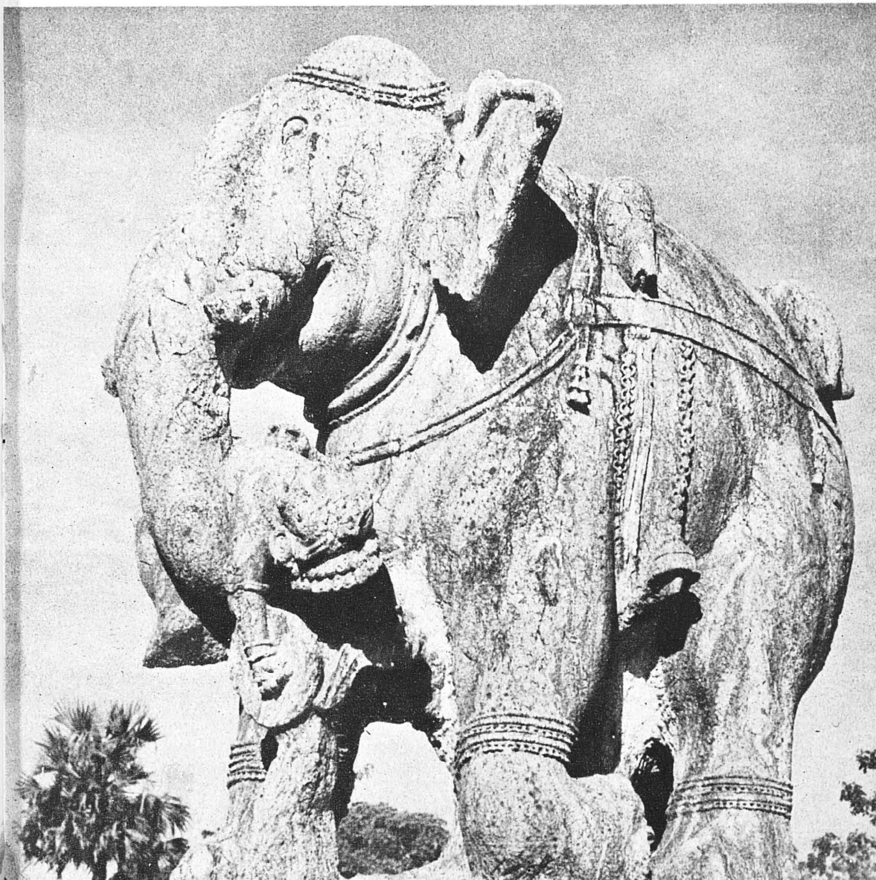
Probably the removal of the *kalasa* and the *dhwaja*—the crown of the main temple which together with the *amla* or *amara-shila** rose originally to a height of 36 feet, the temple itself from ground level having been 225 feet high—helped in the caving in of the walls. But the fact remains that from the last quarter of the 16th century until 1824 it was neglected and remained buried and in ruins.

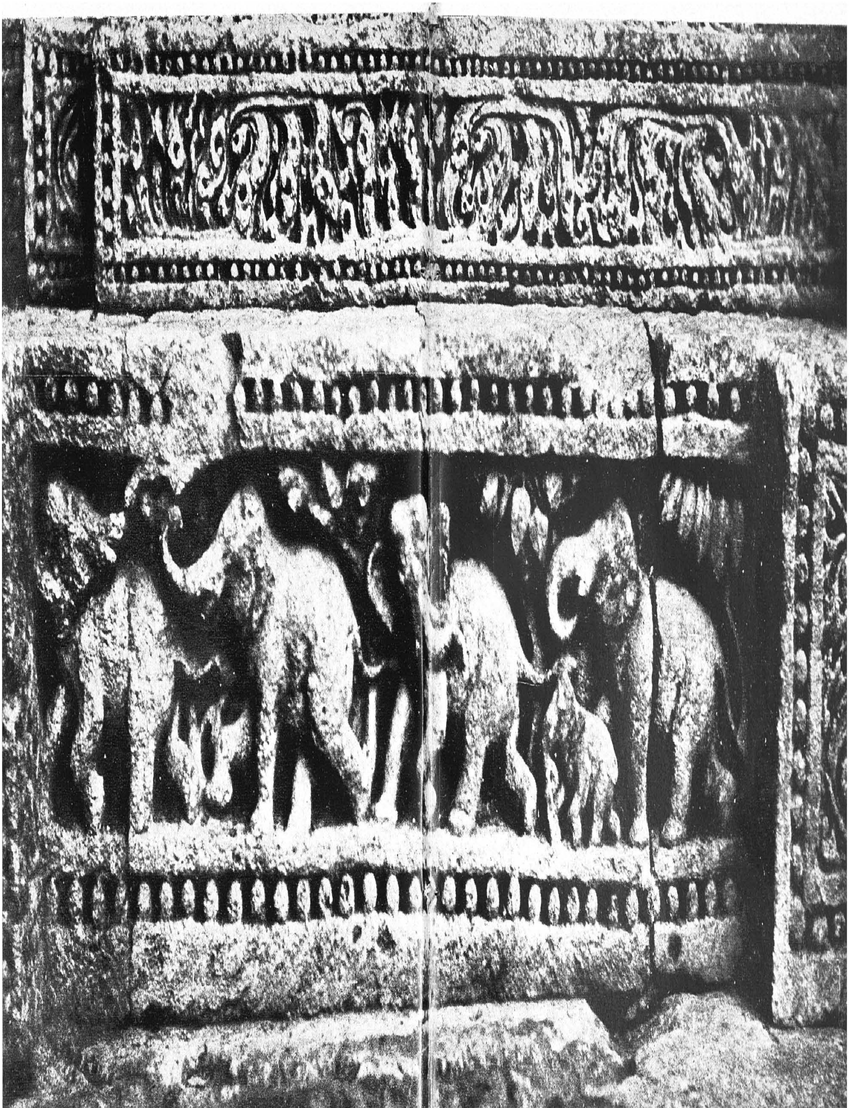
It was left to a British official to draw public attention to the Sun Temple after more than two centuries of neglect. He visited it in 1824 and wrote:

"The origin of the dilapidation may obviously be ascribed either to an earthquake or to lightning, but many causes have concurred to accelerate the progress of destruction when once a beginning had been made. To say nothing of the effects of weather on a deserted building, and of the vegetation that always takes root under such circumstances, it is clear that much injury has been done by the

*The name *amla* led Fergusson to think that that part of the temple had its origin in the small fruit *amlaki* to which it has some resemblance in shape. The conjecture has, however, no ground to stand upon. The word is an abbreviation of *amara-shila*......The very name *amla*......shows that it was a stone (*shila*) which kept the building safe (*amara*). Bishan Swarup.

A striking representation of a war-elephant. The massive sculpture depicts the beast in a furious mood, about to hurl away an enemy soldier with his trunk.





Frieze depicting a procession of wild elephants with a baby-elephant

Leogriff attacking a prostrate elephant is another dynamic sculpture at Konarka

Deer motif

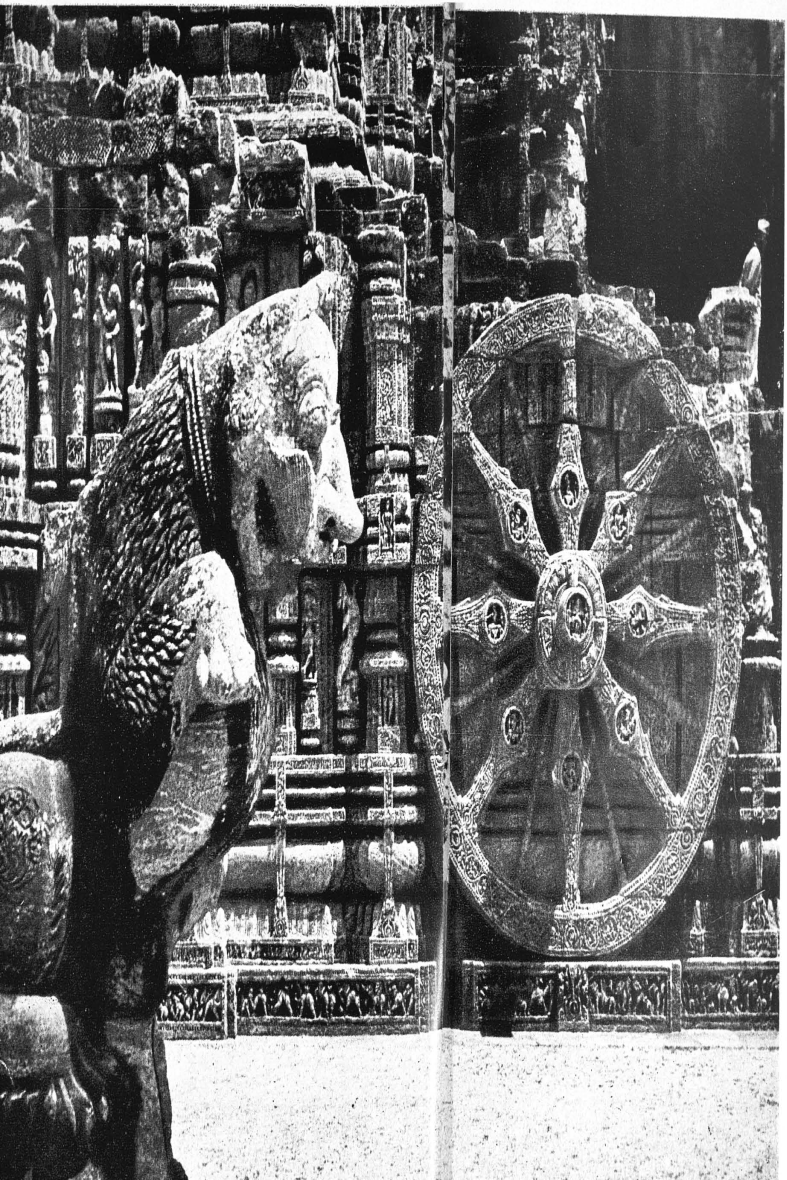
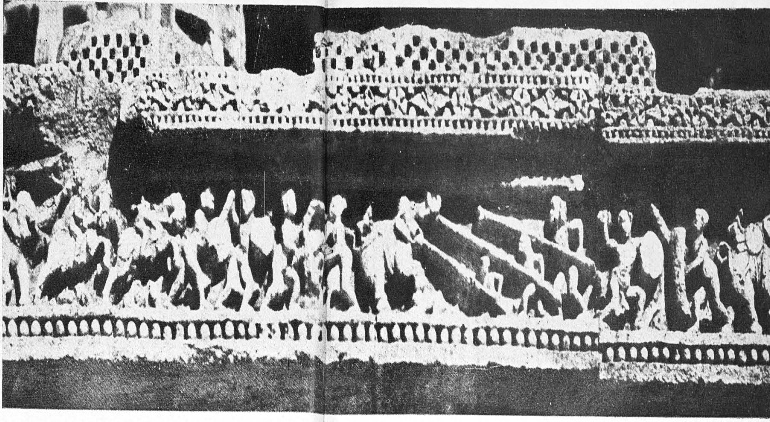


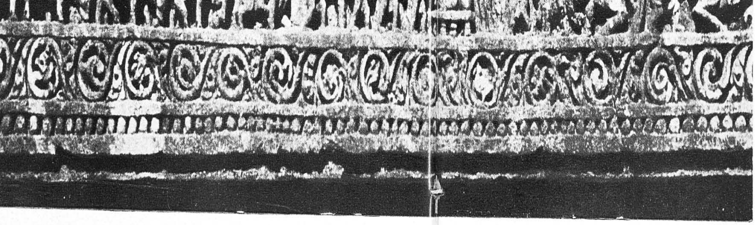
Figure of a leogriff in an attacking attitude

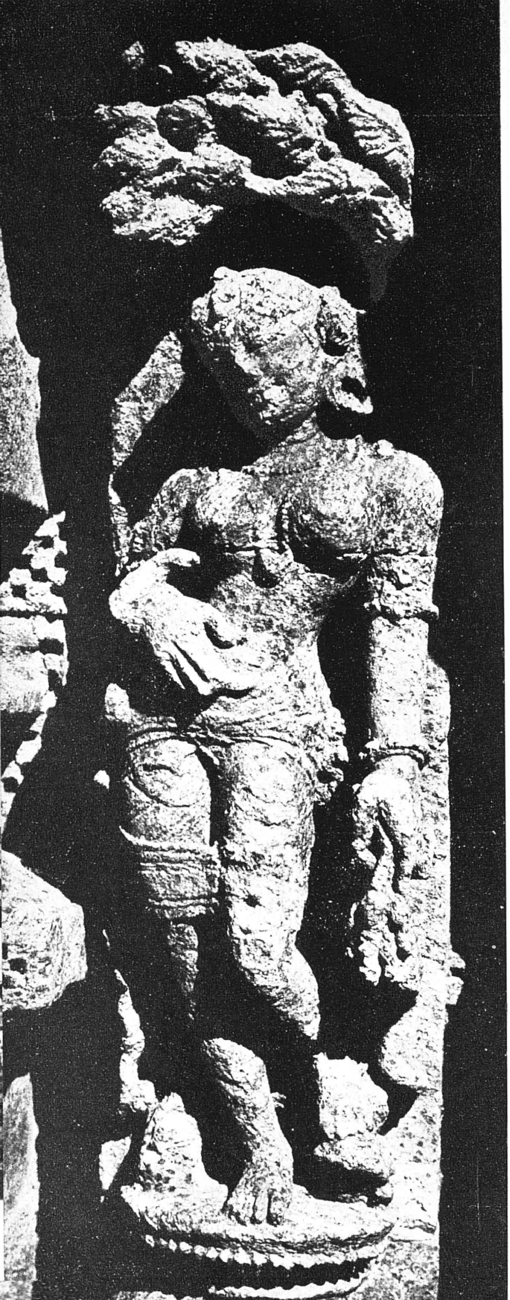
Decorative panel depicting wild boars

A tourist seems lost in the beauty and intricacy of the sculptures on the base of the Natamandir



Two sections of attractive frieze work. The capture of a wild elephant is depicted above; below, a procession.





Tree nymph

Figure of Trikala-Bhairava

Mythological beings half-human and half-animal

In lazy mood

Lady with mirror is shown in a romantic reverie

"Nagini" or snake-woman. It is one of the many sculptures at Konarka depicting "Naga" and "Nagini".

inhabitants of the neighbourhood,—in forcing out the iron clamps which held the stones together, for the sake of the metal, and it is well-known that the officers of the Marhatta Government actually broke down a part of the walls to procure materials for building some insignificant temples at Puri."

It must be remembered that at the time of Narsingha Deva's inspection, A.D. 1628, the *amla* had toppled off, whether hacked down by the vandals when they carried off the *kalasa* and *dhwaja* or whether dislodged by the removal of the supporting weight on top, being uncertain.

Fergusson visited the place in 1838, and several others, including Dr. Rajendralal Mitter, visited the ruins of the Sun Temple. Even the ruins that Stirling and Fergusson had found intact were destroyed by a gale in 1848. The Report of the Baptist Mission (1848) has a reference to this:

"Proceeding to Kanerak we found neither villages nor markets on this part of our journey, which however, lasted only two days or a part of two days. Having surveyed and examined the wonderful ruins of the temple of the Sun, we turned towards the north. Since the period to which these remarks refer, the tall, narrow shaft of a part of the tower of Black Pagoda has been blown entirely down, and nothing now remains, but the 'Mooksala' or entrance chamber. This shaft was overset by the October gale. The stone roof of the 'Mooksala' has also fallen in, and that splendid specimen is not destined to survive many years. Kanerak will soon be a simple heap of stones."

Fortunately for us this dire prediction has not come true.

It must also be added that many experts, including engineers, in trying to find a theory for the crumbling of the main temple made several guesses. Lightning and earthquake—we have already mentioned. Another theory was the sinking of the foundations. These theories have been rejected by Bishan Swarup who was engaged in excavating the ruins and in preserving it in the condition we find it today. He wrote:

" . . . Lightning could have hardly shattered such a massive structure with walls 15 to 25 feet thick. The same might be said of earthquake unless the shock was very violent, and in this case the

temple would have fallen on one side, and not as it did forming a heap of stones just over itself. It evidently fell in, spreading the debris round-about itself. The failure of foundations too could not have caused such a heavy building to collapse, unless the subsidence was on one side only, and deep enough to shift the vertical line through the centre of gravity to fall outside the stupendous base of the temple. In this case also the debris should have fallen on one side only, which was not the case. As a matter of fact, as can be seen now that all the debris has been removed, there has not been any visible sinking of foundations. The theory seems to have its origin in the wrong idea that sandy soil did not make a good foundation. We know, however, that below the loose stuff on the surface, pure sand forms one of the best foundations, and the masonry of the temple has certainly been taken down much below the layer of the loose drifting sand. Dr. Hunter seems to have been under the impression that for the sort of roofs we have on Orissan temples, internal pillars were necessary for support and it was the fall of these pillars that brought down the roof. This is just contrary to the principle on which these roofs are constructed, for the heavy top of the roof keeps the corbelling of the horizontal arch in position and once its weight is taken off by the pillars the corbelling must fall . . . "

The above lengthy quotation was necessary to prove that our ancestors were not only perfect sculptors but were also consummate builders.

Konarka continued to be neglected until the last quarter of the last century. Then the trustees of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, felt that the *Navagraha* architrave of the eastern door should be moved to the Calcutta Museum. It was shifted a few yards and the task was given up. In 1881 through another official effort the statues of horses, lions and elephants which were lying about scattered were placed on specially built platforms facing the doorways which they had originally adorned. The Museum trustees made another effort to move the *Navagraha* stone. The beam was split, but even with the weight halved it could not be moved much further.

The work of excavating and removal of debris began in earnest

in 1901 and gradually the horses and wheels of the *Ratha* (chariot) emerged after having been buried in the sand for three centuries. As the excavation went apace the work of preservation and conservation was also taken in hand and the Jagamohan was restored by 1905. Next the Natamandir was similarly restored and the classic statue of the Sun-God was discovered and set up.

When the debris to the west of the Jagamohan was cleared it revealed not only a portion of the main tower but also the *Singhasana*,* literally a throne supported on lions, meaning in this instance the pedestal on which a particular statue had stood.

It was quite by accident that the Maya Devi Temple was discovered. It had been completely buried under sand and debris and then in removing the rubble and sand after the tower had been cleared they came across a mound which betrayed no sign of the temple it hid. The engineers in charge of the restoration persisted with the excavation of this mound until the Maya Devi Temple was brought to light.

A lakh of rupees, a large sum of money in those days for restoring an ancient monument, was spent on excavations and repairs and by 1910 the Konarka Temple appeared on the map of India.

Its importance not only for tourists but also for students of art and Indian history has increased rapidly. From 1947 the National Government has done everything to conserve ancient monuments and a share of this attention has been lavished upon the Konarka Temple.

One no longer thinks of it as a ruin, and apart from the stream of visitors it attracts there are now a number of seasonal festivals here which are attended by village folk.

Konarka Defined

Before we begin admiring the Jagamohan, Natamandir and the beautiful sculptures, the conception and execution of which are in many cases peculiar to Konarka, we must find a meaning for Konarka. The direct translation is Corner-Sun. Could it refer to Shiva as the Sun-God standing in the south-east corner? If so

*See Appendix III

this is the only instance of its use. But as the term *Arka-bandhu* (related to the Sun) is one of the many names given to the Buddha, some critics are inclined to believe that Konarka was another name for the Buddha. *Kona* is derived 'from the root *kun*, to support'. It is the contention of these scholars that just as Puri is called Jagannath after the name of the presiding deity, and Bhuvaneswar is called Baidyanath or Vaidyanath, at Konarka the name of the presiding deity of the place became associated with it.*

It has also been suggested by certain authorities that the word is derived from the name of a previous Buddha, Konagamana or Konakammana, whose memory is associated with a *stupa* near Kapilavastu which was restored by Emperor Asoka.

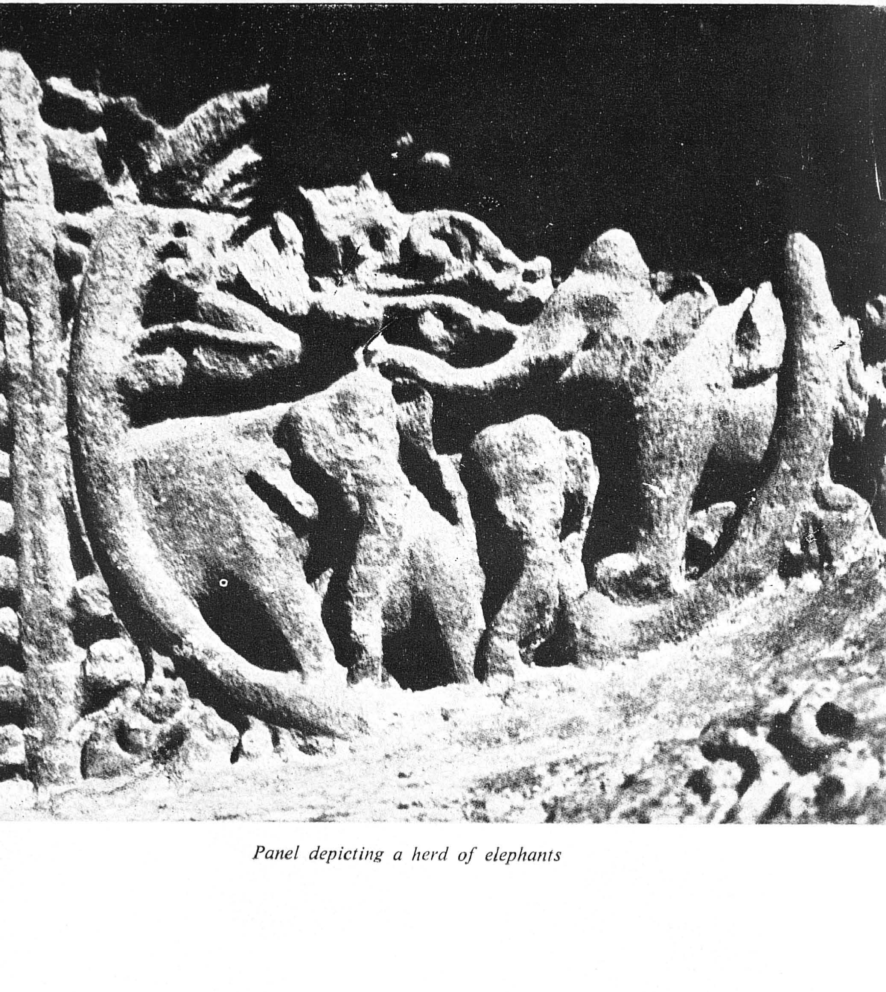
According to the *Brahma Purana*, Konarka is a *tirtha*, a holy place. *Kshetra*, as mentioned previously meaning *field*, *region*, *area*, is applied to specific areas of sanctity associated with Hindu mythology. As such Konarka is named a *Kshetra* in the *Brahma Purana*, according to which the presiding deity was known as Konaditya, Konarka, the Sun-God. The Samba legend does not find a place in the *Brahma Purana*, Adhyaya 27, which says:

> "In the Bharata Varsha (India) close to the southern sea is the famous country of Odra (Orissa). It is a place where pious men live. The Brahmans there are well versed in the *Veda*, *Shastra*, *Ithihasa*, and *Purana*, and are engaged in performing *yagyan* (ritual and prayer) and other religious rites. The people of the other three castes are also pious and absorbed in their religious duties. In Odra is the Sun known as Konaditya, seeing whom man is freed from all his sins. The *Kshetra* sacred to this thousand-rayed God who bestows salvation and all wishes, extends seven *yojan* (diameter of 63 miles) and is enriched by all kinds of trees bearing a variety of fruits and flowers. Devotees should bathe in the sea there on the *Shukla Saptami* (7th day of the bright half of the month), and offering libations of water to *Pitrus* (ancestors) worship the Sun with complete devotion. Whoever offers *argha* to the Sun obtains salvation. Whoever recites the name of the Illuminator of the

*See Appendix V

"Gaja-Singha" or lion-elephant combination is a characteristic figure decorating the facades of Orissan temples

One of the seven horses of the Sun-God's chariot. The idea of terrific motion is conveyed with great success in this sculpture.



Panel depicting a herd of elephants

three worlds gets eternal happiness. The Sun thus worshipped, after one has bathed in the sea, one who has been afflicted with disease is cured; those desirous of wealth obtain their wishes; one desiring a son gets a son; all desires are fulfilled (through these devotions). By bathing in the waters of the *Surya-ganga* (Sun-river) and by sprinkling its waters with a *kusa* (grass) over one's head one is absolved from all sins and attains heaven. By an offering of flowers to the Sun a man is assured of life in *Surya-loka*. The worship of Konarka with *Vedamantra* with offerings of sandal incense, flowers, lights, and food is equal to the effect of ten *Ashwamedha-Yagyan* (horse-sacrifices), and the devotee, thus freed from all sins attains *Surya-loka* with a body resplendent like the Sun and attains *moksha* (liberation). He who attends the festival of Kamadeva in the bright half of the month of *Chaitra* secures for himself all these benefits. Whoever goes on pilgrimage there at the time of the equinoxes, solstices, and the like, or on Sundays or *Saptamis*, will live in *Surya-loka*. On the sea-shore close by is the *Shivalinga* known as Vamadeva by worship of whom one attains *Shiva-loka* and *moksha*. One who dies in this *Suryakshetra* goes to *Surya-loka* and obtains *moksha*."

The *Kapila Samhita* also describes the virtues of this *kshetra* and refers to the forest Maitreya named after the sage Maitreya who lived there and practised his devotions. It says: "Verily, there is not a river on earth equal to the *Surya-ganga*. Bathing in the sea (which faces Konarka) a person purifies himself from all sins. The Lord of Waters, the Sea, is the noblest of all sacred waters and in the waves of the Lord of Rivers there exists the sacred Rameshwara which Rama worshipped for the good of all living creatures. . . ." Another sacred treatise, the *Prachi Mahatmya*, describing the virtues of the Prachi Saraswati (Chandrabhaga river) speaks of the efficacy of the waters of the river and the cure which they effected in the case of Samba. The *Madala Panji* also upholds the sanctity of the *kshetra*.

It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that from Buddhist times Konarka was regarded as a place of sanctity. The fact of its prominence by the sea facing the rising sun is an added reason.

After the decline of Buddhist worship in the sixth century Konarka must have become a centre of Shiva worship with the emphasis on the Sun cult with attendant sacrifices, horse-sacrifices, etc., and conceivably human sacrifice as well. With the spread of *Bhakti* cult in Bengal and Orissa in the 13th century the Natamandir was erected at Konarka and worship of Vishnu and Mystic Love were more stressed in place of the earlier Tantric 'Vama-Shiva' or 'Left-handed' Shiva worship. But the Konarka Temple as a whole has borne throughout the original Buddhist impress.

It is, however, as a Sun Temple that we approach Konarka today.

Let us say, at this stage, that the Sun Temple of Konarka is not only the most magnificent temple in Orissa, even in its partly restored state, but that it is the most magnificent of its kind in the whole of India with all her myriad temples.

Architecture

In Orissan temple architecture a temple consists of the Deul or sanctuary containing an image of the presiding deity and a Jagamohan, with doors facing the four quarters of the earth. The Deul, which in order to maintain an atmosphere of sanctity and solemnity must not be entered by worshippers and must be dimmed, has only the door which leads to it from the Jagamohan. Standing at this door devotees have *darshan* of the deity and make their offerings and utter their prayers.

A Natamandir, not necessarily for use exclusively as a hall for sacred temple dances, is also an adjunct of Orissan temples. The Natamandir is usually in front of the Jagamohan and when not used for community hymn-singing—the singing of *bhajans* and *kirtans* or for religious discourses by visiting holy men or pandits—is used as a pilgrims' rest. Usually there is another building close to the Natamandir called Bhogamandap (*bhoga*: food, *mandap*: hall) used as a place where the food offerings (ghee, honey, water from the Ganga, etc.) to the deity are prepared. In early times when animal sacrifices were made the Bhogamandap was possibly used for that purpose.

The outer walls of the Orissan temples are generally in five

sections or faces, each section being a twofold projection. The five-part building is called a Pancharathi while a seven-part building each with threefold projections is called a Saptarathi. The projections are progressively carried to the top ending in the *amla* or crown.

The Konarka Temple is built in the Orissan style of architecture on the Pancharathi plan. There is the main temple consisting of the Jagamohan and Deul, and there is the Natamandir. There is also the subsidiary Maya Devi Temple already alluded to.

As is fitting for a Sun Temple the Konarka Temple is conceived in the form of a chariot, *Ratha.** We shall not stop to examine the claims of various scholars as to the origin and derivation of the chariot device at Konarka, and at other temples of Orissa. A note in the appendices refers to some of these theories.†

The chariot-temple of Konarka is on twenty-four wheels. We say *on* because though the whole edifice is on a solid foundation the wheels have been so cunningly incorporated that they do not seem to be something exterior to the building but actually the motive power of the building.

For, this is the most significant thing about Konarka. The sense of motion is there. The building for all its solidity is not static. This sense of motion conveyed by the wheels is further heightened by the seven horses. The Sun-God's chariot is drawn by seven horses. We have to imagine what the effect must have been when the seven horses were in their proper positions and each of them exerted just that power to draw the chariot. We can imagine this easily, for the horses as they are now convey that sense of movement under restraint.

The horses of Konarka Temple are the most perfect animal statuary in the whole world.

Each magnificent animal drawing the chariot is capable of exerting more power. But each of the seven horses exerts only that much energy as was necessary to move the temple on its wheels—if it had to be moved. By their combined strength the temple would

*See Appendix IV
†See Appendix V

move, gracefully, evenly, at a slow dignified pace. It is as if through some mathematical calculation the sculptors had worked out the ratio between weight and motion and had then imparted that minutely correct strain to the muscles and limbs of each horse. There are other beautiful statues in the temple, for example, the Sun-God. But nothing attains such an artistic perfection as the horses at Konarka.

A headless attendant walks by the side of each horse, the incline of his body and the angle of his arm indicating with what exactness he is regulating his speed to that of the noble animal. The attendant is a mere formality, for these are very intelligent horses. Four horses are on the right side; three on the other. Each horse measures across its body five feet two inches.

The wheels of the *Ratha* are each nine feet, nine inches in diameter. Each wheel has eight thick spokes intricately shaped and skilfully carved and between the thick spokes there are eight rod-shaped thin spokes. Each big spoke is not only beautifully fashioned but has a space for a carving of couples in mildly erotic poses. On the rims and all around, above and below, there are scrolls and carvings of human beings and animals. The projecting axles likewise are ornamented. No Grecian urn could have had more care and love lavished upon it than had these twenty-four wheels of the Sun-Chariot at Konarka.

Supporting the wheels—actually the whole plinth—is a foot-deep stylobate above ground level. The whole of it on all four sides is filled with carvings of elephants in bas-relief. The plinth is a lovely pattern of richly carved pilasters at regular intervals with a band halving as it were the full pilaster, and above the band the pilasters are continued till they end in lotus-petalled capitals. Between these upper pillars are panels which consist mostly of erotic sculptures.

Steps lead up the plinth from the three sides to the Jagamohan. What a solemn appearance the whole temple must have presented with these wide steps leading up to the temple from the east, south and north entrances! Today they are a jumble of stone blocks though a few steps have been restored.

Panels from the Natamandir showing the figures of a drummer (left) and a dancer (right)

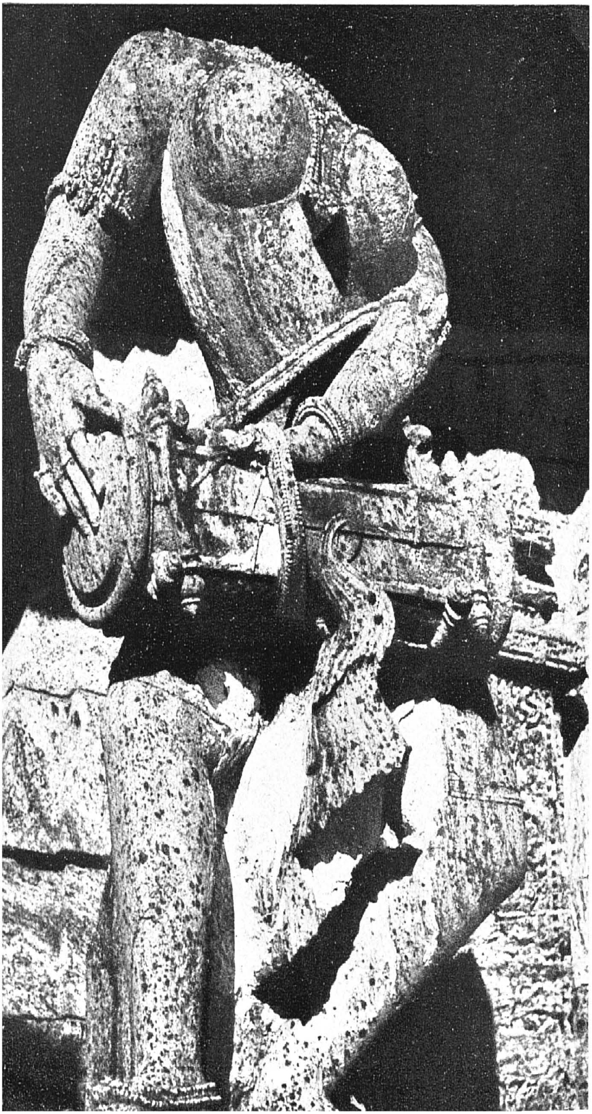
Drummer in action

Dancing damsel in an alluring pose

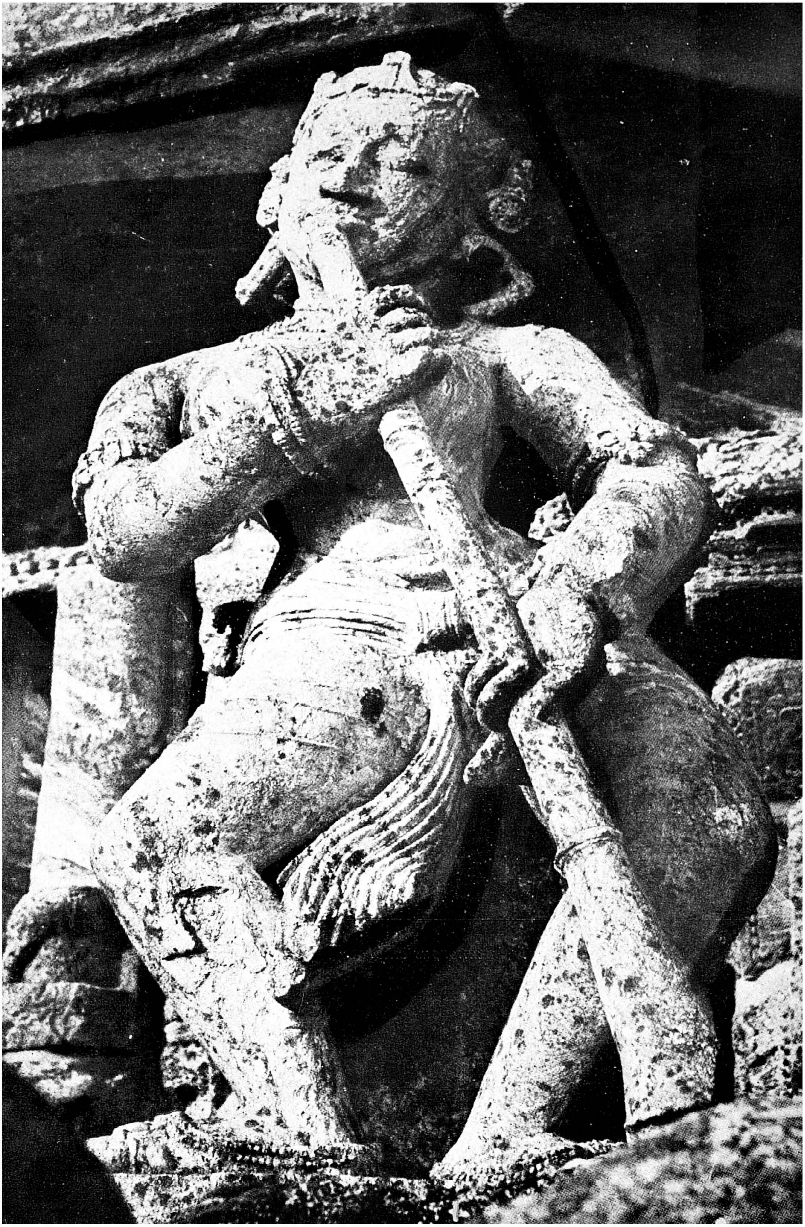
Another fine sculpture of a drummer

Profile of a cymbal-player absorbed in music

Headless figure of a drummer. The delicate positioning of the fingers on the drum's face is striking.



Like all the figures of musicians, this flute-player is also shown bedeeked with jewellery



"Naga" and "Nagini" in amorous embrace

Sculpture

This is the first view of the Jagamohan which greets the visitor. But before one examines closely the separate sculptures of the Jagamohan one should step back and gaze at the whole structure from below upwards. Only the *amla* or crown now remains. In its original state the ribbed dome (*amla*) was topped by a water-jar-shaped *kalasa* over which, topmost, was the *dhwaja*, a design, in the case of the Sun Temple, of a lotus in metal.

The pattern, repeated in other projections of the temple and on the tower of the Deul, since destroyed, must have made Konarka a landmark for ships out at sea and for the whole countryside for miles around. All this has to be imagined today. The pyramidal shape of the roof has been dictated both by aesthetic considerations and structural requirements.

Tracing one's gaze downwards one observes the lions supporting the *amla*, then three tiers of cornices, the higher tier consisting of five rows of cornices, while the lower two consist of six rows of cornices each. The lowest tier is fifteen and a half feet thick, the cornices varying in thickness from three feet to one foot three inches.

In the niches between the top tier and the middle tier are graceful figures of women playing upon the long-shaped drum (*khol*) or striking cymbals. These happy female minstrels are repeated in the recesses between the middle and lowest tier.

Other statuary which must be observed in the outer area are the *Navagraha* stone, the elephants, and the lions standing rampant on elephants.

Navagraha or representation of the Nine Planetary Rulers, is necessary over temple doorways to ward off evil influences. One such *Navagraha* stone architrave left about a quarter of a mile from the temple during the unsuccessful attempt to remove it to Calcutta is again a marvellous piece of carving. The Planetary Rulers depicted on this stone slab are: *Ravi* (Sun, not to be confused with the Sun-God); *Chandra* or Moon; *Mangala* or Mars; *Budha* or Mercury; *Vrihaspati* or Jupiter; *Sukra* or Venus: *Sani* or Saturn; *Rahu* or the ascending node; *Kethu* or the descending node. Jupiter is shown with beard.

Also to be studied carefully are the lions standing rampant upon elephants which have seized with their trunks a man each. These animal groups are so realistic that one imagines a maddened elephant catching hold of its trainer or attendant and a lion who had watched the incident jumping upon the elephant with all its instinct of ferocity aroused. It would almost seem that the lion had protective feelings towards the man. In the light of certain lion legends in Kalinga and Vanga where, in one instance, a lion carried off a princess and fathered two human children, a son and a daughter, we might even be right in our guess that the lion was provoked to the limit by the elephant's sudden attack upon its keeper.

These lion-elephant groups which had been displaced from their original positions are now placed in the best positions possible. These lion figures—they are really *Gaja-Singha* or Royal Lions—standing rampant on the elephants were originally on the tower of the Deul at a height of 153 feet from the plinth level on a projection seven feet from the *Rahapaga* or the projecting face of the tower, the whole statuary group measuring five feet across and sixteen feet in height. The plinth, we have already mentioned, is 13 feet 3 inches high and itself rests on a stylobate one foot high. So this monumental animal statuary remained poised on a projection from the main wall of the tower at a height of 167 feet from the ground! The total height of the tower to the top of the steeple according to existing records was 174 feet.

How these statuary groups were raised, and with what mathematical and engineering skill they were balanced and fixed at that height just baffles our imagination.

I must now draw the visitor's attention to those two elephants which have been arrested by the sculptor in flight—on a battle-field surely. Each elephant has grasped a warrior—his thick limbs, the short legs, are all in the right proportions when compared to the whole composition—while another man lies prostrate under each elephant. A genius could have imagined this scene—of the usually slow-moving elephant suddenly vibrant in every fibre of its being, light on its feet, and determined to wreak the utmost havoc upon the enemies of the kingdom.

A kind fate has preserved for us these breath-taking sculptures. One can only wish that the painters and sculptors of India today went and spent days, weeks, months, years studying these models.

O! Master Sculptors of Konarak! You who did not leave the least clue to your identity! You who lived in huts close to the scene of your labours! You who worked at night by the light of torches held by your sleep-weary wives, and daughters! You who worked with zest when the full moon made the landscape light as day while a mile or so away the sea's roar muted by the night chanted a soothing tune to the blows of your hammers and chisels—you, Great Sons of Orissa, are you still watching from your own *lokas*, as we pygmies impatiently flit past your masterpieces?

I like to think that when the day's labours were over these master-sculptors lying on reed-mats in their crudely-built huts kept thinking of their uncompleted figures, that they imagined the curve of a line here, the upsweep of a contour there, that imagining the completed figure they got up restless, refusing to accept the sleep that night offered for their tired bodies and went back to their tasks and kept hammering away, chiselling away, stroking with their sensitive hands the surface of the stone as pieces of it were chipped off and lines and curves appeared where before there had been a dead mass of stone.

I like to think that those simple Orissan carvers were also great lovers of Beauty—in the stone as well as in the flesh. It would look that every other maiden in Orissa was a Helen for whom a king might have launched ten thousand ships but for the fact that there was not just one Helen but a multitude of them. It is those beautiful maidens that the sculptors carved in the figures of Couples in Embrace (*The Mithunas*).

We must remember that this was a Sun Temple. With the Sun cult as it came to us from Iran, by way of Greece and Crete, our ancestors combined the Tantric worship of Shiva, and the physical expression of love was upheld without reserve.

Thus, custom and usage were there to defend the sculptors. Besides, those sculptors have worked with a frenzy, with a zest, with their own bodies filling with the passion which they poured into stone, with no thought of reward, or hire or recognition.

The Deul, the sanctuary, the temple proper, over which rose the tower to a height of 174 feet, must have housed the chief statue of the Sun-God. This statue has been removed to Puri. But the throne, *Singhasana*, on which the statue reposed, is here yet. This fine carving in chlorite stone was found in 1906 when the debris around the remnant of the tower of the Deul was cleared. The *Singhasana* measures eleven feet in length, seven and a half feet in breadth, and four feet eight inches in height. Over this is the pedestal, or was, for what remains is a part of the pedestal, the rest having been probably wrenched away when the statue was removed. The many carvings of elephants and kneeling worshippers on the *Singhasana* are all perfectly proportioned and appropriately spaced.

Though the Deity of the Sun Temple is no longer here there are several other Sun-Gods. One of the best modelled statues is that which had probably been originally in the Maya Devi Temple and removed to the Natamandir where it was found. The hands which should have held two lotus flowers* are broken. The rest of the statue is intact and in a fair state of preservation. The charioteer, Aruna, sits at the feet of the Sun-God—Aruna's figure is shown only above the thighs, a convention necessitated by the composition as much as by the legend of his having been taken out of the egg by his mother, Vinata, while still in a half-formed state—holding in his hand the reins of the seven horses which are depicted in the panel immediately below. The trefoil arch and the crown of the Sun-God are exquisitely carved. The usual attendants of the Sun-God, male and female, are also included. The whole slab is six feet three inches high, and the statue, though in perfect proportion and ideally composed, was not that of the presiding Sun-God of Konarka.

What is of interest really is a smaller statue of *Surya*, also picked out of the debris. The statue, again carved on the classic model, is four-armed. The two hands which held the lotuses are broken but of the remaining two hands, one holds a *Trishula* or trident, while the other is stretched out downwards with palm open

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*The Sun-God and Surya are always depicted with two lotuses.

indicating the sign of bestowing prosperity. Aruna and the seven horses are intact.

But the most impressive statues of the Sun-God are those on the south, west and north of the middle projecting wall (*Rahapaga*) of what is left of the tower of the Deul or sanctuary. These statues are carved in relief on chlorite slabs. The best preserved is that on the south side, the statue being eight feet six inches high. Unlike the usual *Surya* statues there is no crown on the head: instead as in the Buddha statues the hair is piled high and gathered by a band. The serenity of the face and the Grecian torso further add to the resemblance to Gandhara Buddha statues. But apart from that sculptural deviation the composition is that of the Sun-God, the two arms being broken at the elbows, the legs encased in knee-high boots, for the feet of the Sun-God must not be seen, and between his feet is Aruna, legless, and holding the reins of seven prancing horses depicted with every suggestion of being restrained in their speed. From the waist-band of the Sun-God hangs a sheathed sword; worshippers kneel at either side of the Sun-God; two bearded figures stand by each kneeling figure; two female figures, taller than the rest, their height increased by tall crowns, each holding a bow in the left hand; and on the higher panel on a level between the waist and chest of the God a pair of female figures on either side—bearing in their hands incense-pots and *chamars* (fly whisks). The Sun-God* has two wives, Chhaya (Shadow literally) and Sanjna.

At the top on a level with the shoulders are two figures, of Brahma, on the right, and Vishnu, on the left. The arch over the Sun-God shows heavenly singers and dancers, *Apsaras*.

There are other panels and statues which have not been mentioned here. There are panels showing an archer, a king setting out on a journey, a teacher imparting instruction to two maidens, and a particularly attractive scene of Sita being given in marriage by her father, Janaka, to Rama.

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*The Sun-God assumes three different forms: Brahma in the morning; Shiva at noon; and Vishnu in the evening. In the *Rig Veda* he is given the three names: *Tvashtri*, *Pushan*, and *Bhaga*. As Vishnu he covers the world in three steps, riding on his horse, Harita.

I have not discussed in detail the beautifully carved pillars of the Natamandir and the lovely dancers and drummers. The Natamandir is singularly free from the exuberance of the eroticism depicted in the sculptures on the outside of the Jagamohan, thus further proving the thesis that this was built in the 13th century when the *Bhakti* cult had superseded the Tantric cult.

Even if the Sun-God has deserted Konarka leaving behind minor duplicates of Himself, Konarka is still a veritable treasure-house of Beauty conceived in the classic mould. So long as the horses of Konarka remain every Indian can say 'not for all the kingdoms of the world will I exchange one single horse of Konarka'.

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APPENDIX I

In his description of the country of Ucha (Udra, Odra or Oda) or north Orissa, Hiuen Tsang who refers to Chelitalo, further says: "Going south 20,000 *li* or so is the country of Simhala (Sengkialo). In the still night, looking far off, we see the surmounting precious stone of the tooth-*stupa* of the Buddha brilliantly shining and scintillating as a bright torch burning in the air."

Seeing the present importance of Puri, Chelitalo may be identified with Puri, but there is nothing against its being the same as the town on the Prachi which was in old days probably much more important than Puri. The *Brahma Purana* says that Raja Indradyumna while going to Purushottama-Kshetra (Puri) saw the sacred river Chitrotpala which flowing to the south fell into the sea, and on the banks of which were situated small and big towns containing wealthy and learned population. It appears probable that one of the big towns on this river was named Chitrotpala which is mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim as Chelitalo. The river Chitrotpala can easily be identified with the Kadua, a branch of the river Prachi, if we read the *Prachi Mahatmya.* While describing the different incarnations of the heavenly river Saraswati, the *Mahatmya* says that last of all it came down as the river Bhadra which was also known as Chitrotpala. Further on it is mentioned as Prachi Saraswati. There is still a place called Bhadra near where the Kadua takes off from the Prachi. This gave its name to the stream About five miles from the Black Pagoda a channel branches off from the river Kadua. The lower portion of its course is silted up. This is the Chandrabhaga, now known as Kaduajor. Close to the bifurcation of this channel are two villages, Chitra on the right and Opala on the left bank of the Kadua. These are evidently the remains of the big town Chitrotpala or Chelitalo. Outside the town, Hiuen Tsang saw five very high towers of Buddhist temples, and that of the god Konarka was probably one of them. The Hindus have, as usual, designed a story to explain the name Chitrotpala. A Brahman girl named Utpala was in sexual communication with

a Chandala named Chitra living in a town on the Prachi. They died without issue, and the washings of their bodies formed the river Chitrotpala. Two *lingas* named Chitra and Upala were set up, one on each bank of the river to keep up their memory. The name, I feel convinced, was derived from the form of the *dhwaja* (or distinguishing mark of the god) on the top of the temples at the place which we know was a lotus. The word Chitrotpala means 'wonderful lotus' or 'lotus used as a sectarian mark'.

APPENDIX II

In Orissa, the Bauddhas and their saints held on until the 11th century A.D., and the public had not altogether lost faith in their tenets. A story of how they left the place is told in the *Madala Panji*, in the account of the reign of Raja Madana Mahadeva of Ganga *Vansha*. The Rani of Raja Madana Mahadeva, hearing that Bauddha saints living in the Dhauli and other rocks could tell events of past, present and future by their meditation, asked the Raja one day to entertain them. The Raja thereupon said she should not care for them as they did not believe in gods and were generally inferior to the Brahmans. The Rani not agreeing, it was settled that both the Bauddhas and Brahmans be sent for to appear at a test. They were accordingly called and asked to say what there was in a pot, the mouth of which was closed and into which the Raja had a snake put beforehand. The Bauddhas by their meditation said there was snake in the pot, but the Brahmans said it contained only ashes. The cover was opened and the pot was found to contain ashes and no snake. The Raja thereupon ordered the Bauddhas to be beheaded. They protested that what they said was a fact, and it was only by the curse of the Brahmans that the snake was turned into ashes. For the order given by the Raja they pronounced a curse (*shapa*) that he should get a disease by which worms should fall from his tongue. After this some of the Bauddhas were killed and the rest left their abodes in the Dhauli and other hills and went away. The Raja got the disease which he could not get rid of until he made liberal grants of land to the Brahmans.

APPENDIX III

"With a big Buddhistic fair like the car festival being held at the place, it is but natural that one should be anxious to know who the presiding divinity, Konarka, originally was. The Shivites worshipped him, we have seen, as Shiva in his form of the Sun. The older records of *Madala Panji* do not at all enlighten us in this respect. They call him Konarkadeva without saying a word as to who he was. It is only a record of much recent date that says that 'in the time of Narsingha Deva... who reigned from Saka 1527, the deities of *Chandra* and *Surya* were brought (to Puri) from the temple of Konarka and placed in Indra's temple'.

"Seeing that nowhere else is a mention made of *Chandra* being companion of Konarka, that the Singhasana found in the temple is too small to hold two statues, and that the date given does not at all agree with the older record which mentions that in the ninth year of Narsingha Deva's reign, Shah Jahan was the emperor at Delhi, this record must be rejected as unreliable. The statue brought from Konarka has, however, been fortunately preserved within the compound of Puri temple, in a temple now known as Sun Temple. In its front, however, another statue has been set up which is that of the Sun with seven horses, but they keep it covered so shabbily with clothes, etc. that nobody can say what god it represents, and it was only by having the cloth removed that I could believe the Panda's statement that it was the statue of the Sun. But what we are concerned with is the statue at the back, and this is the figure of the Buddha in a sitting posture. The hands are broken and the lower portion of the statue built up in the pedestal of the Sun statue in front. The workmanship is exactly like what we have in the chlorite statues at Konarka. The pedestal of the statue will, it appears from what little measurements could be taken, fit on the upper Singhasana in the Black Pagoda. This statue finally settles in favour of the worship of the Buddha at Konarka, and any doubt remaining can be removed by the fact of there being within the enclosure of the Black Pagoda a temple of Maya Devi. Maya Devi, we know, was the mother of Gotama Buddha. I know of no Hindu goddess that goes by that name."

—*Konarka, The Black Pagoda of Orissa*
by BISHAN SWARUP

APPENDIX IV

The *Kapila Samhita* also mentions the existence of a car festival at Konarka. This festival, observed on such a grand scale at Puri, is without doubt of Buddhistic origin, as in none of the ancient rituals is there any mention of such a festival, and even to this day none of the Hindu gods, except Jagannath and his companions, has a car to go out in a procession.

In Buddhistic days, there was a car festival celebrated at Patna, which is noticed by the Chinese Pilgrim Fa-Hien (409 A.D.) in his book *Fo-Kwo-Ki.* He says, "Every year on the eighth day of the second month there is a procession of images. On this occasion they construct a four-wheeled car, and erect upon it a tower of five stages, composed of bamboos lashed together, the whole being supported by a centre-post resembling a large spear with three points, in height twenty-two feet and more. So it looks like a pagoda. They then cover it with fine white linen, which they afterwards paint with gaudy colours. Having made figures of the *devas*, and decorated them with gold, silver, and glass, they place them under canopies of embroidered silk. Then at the four corners (of the car) they construct niches (shrines), in which they place figures of the Buddha in a sitting posture, with a Bodhisattva standing in attendance. There are perhaps twenty cars thus prepared and differently decorated. During the day of the procession both priests and laymen assemble in great numbers. There are games and music, whilst they offer flowers and incense. The Brahmacharis come forth to offer their invitations. The Buddhas, then, one after the other, enter the city. After coming into the town again they halt. Then all night long they burn lamps, indulge in games and music, and make religious offerings. Such is the custom of all those who assemble on this occasion from the different countries round about."

APPENDIX V

"Here then we find an instance of the incorporation of Buddhism by the Hindus, in which the wholesale worship with the Buddhist deity has been taken over. Even the name of the deity has been kept, only explained in a different way. This fact is the most important and interesting, as nowhere else in Orissa, and probably the whole of India, has Buddhism obtained such an unmixed entry into the Hindu ritual. Even Jagannath who is supposed to be the Buddha, does not represent him either by form or by name.

"In the Black Pagoda, therefore, we may expect better traces of Buddhism than in any other Hindu temple in Orissa. And such is the case. The big chlorite statues of the Sun-God are all eminently of Buddhistic shape and cut, and excepting for the distinguishing marks, seven horses and lotus in both the hands, can hardly be distinguished from standing statues of Buddhistic gods. The numerous figures of *Nagakanyas* and *Nagarajas* (human figures with body of a serpent) which add so much grace to the ornamental detail of the temple are purely Buddhistic conceptions. The figure of Mahalakshmi on the chlorite lintel of the doorways of the Jagamohan, described on page 21, is made exactly in the way the Buddhist made their gooddess of fortune, as depicted on the gateway of Sanchi tope.

"Coming to different scenes represented, we find there are several fine carvings in chlorite showing a *rishi* seated on a Singhasana (generally a raised seat supported on four legs in the form of lions) and giving instructions to a number of persons, young and old, amongst whom may be seen ascetics, rajas, and ordinary householders. One of these is photographed in Plate XIV, figure 4. These certainly represent the Buddha giving his evening discourses on religious and moral philosophy, while staying in different *aramas* or gardens. We read of some Hindu *rishis* also narrating *Puranas* before other ascetics at Naimisharanya and other places, as also before individual Rajas, but seldom is the audience so heterogeneous as we find here, and I am convinced that even if these

sculptures themselves were not meant to show scenes of the Buddha's teachings, they are copies of Buddhistic originals, which represented those scenes and showed how the great Teacher passed his afternoons and the first two watches of his nights. To figure their *rishis* in this way is not very popular amongst the Hindus, and they hardly ever cared to do so.

"The next photograph on the same plate (Plate XIV, figure 5) which has been described on page 29, represents a purely Buddhistic scene. A young prince is exhibiting his skill in archery before other men possessing bows and arrows as also other weapons. The arrows from the bow of this prince are piercing and passing through a rock, and those present are all admiring the feat. No Hindu prince or god is mentioned anywhere as having performed this, excepting Gotama, who in order to show to his kinsmen that he was well versed in archery and use of arms, even without learning them, sent forth his arrows miraculously passing all obstructions in the way. The incident is thus related in the Introduction to the *Jataka*: "Now while he was thus enjoying great splendour, one day there arose the following discussion among his relatives: Siddhartha is wholly given over to pleasure and is not training himself in any manly art. What could he do if war were to occur? The king sent for the future Buddha, and said, 'My child, your relatives are saying that you are not training yourself but are wholly given over to pleasure. Now what do you think we had best do?' 'Sire, I do not need to train myself. Let the crier go about the city beating the drum, to announce that I will show my proficiency. On the seventh day from now I will show my proficiency to my relatives.' The king did so. And the future Buddha assembled together bowmen that could shoot like lightning and at a hair's breadth, and in the midst of the populace, and before his kinsfolk, he exhibited a twelve-fold skill, such as none of the other bowmen could equal. All of which is to be understood after the manner related in the Sharabhanga Birth-Story. So the assembly of his kinsfolk doubted him no longer." The Sharabhanga story relates how the arrows of the Buddha shot at a hair's breadth and went straight to the mark without being caught in the way by any tree or plant, or sticking fast or missing aim.

"The figure of the serpent-hooded god described on page 31 is also, it is sure, a Buddhistic statue representing the incidents just preceding and following Gotama's Buddhaship. The two females are Sujata and her slave-girl Punna who brought *payasa* (rice cooked in milk) in a golden dish to him thinking him to be the presiding deity of the Banyan tree, in fulfilment of a vow made by Sujata that if she got a husband of equal rank, and a son as her first issue, she would make a yearly offering of the value of a hundred thousand pieces of money. Presenting the dish with rice and worshipping the deity the ladies went away. This was just before the attainment of Buddhaship. The serpent-hood shows the protection offered to him by the serpent king Muchalinda against rain and storm which continued for seven days soon after he became a Buddha. The serpent king spread his great hood above his head saying, 'Let neither cold, nor heat, nor gnats, nor flies, wind, sunshine nor creeping creatures come near the Blessed One'.

"Many more scenes from the life of the Buddha could probably have been found if the temple had been entire. As a matter of fact, a lot of its carvings has been removed and lost. A small figure on the *Singhasana* in the sanctuary may, however, be interesting. Just in front on its moulding is the figure of an elephant with a boy feeding him. In the way it has been made it seems to have no connection with the figures above; so the sculptor must have something particular to represent when he placed the figure in the central place on the moulding. It represents, in all probability, the Buddha as the Elephant-trainer as related in the 'Strider over battle-fields' story of the *Jataka*.

"From what has been said above of the god Konarka, and the remains of Buddhism that we find at the locality and on the Black Pagoda itself, it appears quite probable that the chariot form of Pagoda was also a borrowed one, taken from some Buddhistic temple which it replaced. This Buddhist temple was evidently meant to represent the chariot of Prince Siddhartha (Gotama) which he used the day before he renounced the world and had it is likely only four horses in copy of the original chariot. When the Shivites took over Konarka as their deity in the form of the Sun, they attached seven horses to the chariot, according to the number

required by their tradition for the chariot of the Sun. Placing three big figures of gods on three sides of the Deul also seems to have been copied from the Buddhists, who had the figures of the Buddha with Boddhisattvas in niches on the three sides, as appears from the description of the chariots which Fa-Hian saw at Patna.

"We thus see that the temple of Konarka is not only the biggest and finest pagoda in Orissa, but it represents one of the earliest types of temples, that came into existence soon after the car processions of the Buddhists were started."

—*Konarka, The Black Pagoda of Orissa*
by BISHAN SWARUP

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